Rev. Dr. DONALD SAGE MACKAY'S

SERMON AT THE SEVENTY-SIXTH ANNIVERSARY

OF THE

AMERICAN SEAMEN'S FRIEND SOCIETY.

ANNUAL SERMON

BEFORE THE

American Seamen's Friend Society,

AT ITS

SEVENTY-SIXTH ANNIVERSARY,

Sunday, May 8, 1904,

BY THE

Rev. DONALD SAGE MACKAY, D.D.

IN THE

COLLEGIATE CHURCH.

AMERICAN SEAMEN'S FRIEND SOCIETY,
76 WALL STREET, NEW YORK.
1904.

SERMON.

Thy way is in the sea, and Thy path in the great waters.—Psalm lxxvii: 19.

There is no more thrilling chapter in human history than that which recounts man's achievements on the sea. We often speak indeed of the perils of the sea, the sorrows it has created, the homes it has desolated, the brave lives and the goodly ships which its storms have destroyed, and the record is sad enough. But it is just possible we may overdo this side of the picture. The sea is not always storm-crested and the sailor's life is not always one of hardship. The ocean is not man's unceasing antagonist, and it is well surely once in a while to remember how much man owes to the sea, what a mighty factor it has been in the civilization of the world and what an influence it has exerted in bringing together the scattered nations of the earth and developing the ungarnered treasures of nature.

The sea is the pathway of commerce. Its romance has meant more to man than its terrors. Its riches have been greater than its losses. Its ministry has been helpful far more than destructive, and it is but a partial and onesided view which thinks only of the perils of the deep in its moments of storm and tempest, without also remembering that the sea is the great thoroughfare of Providence along which the divine purpose moves. "Thy way," says the Psalmist, "is in the sea, and Thy path in the great waters."

Our subject this morning is one which, perhaps, is somewhat unusual for an occasion like this, yet not, I hope, any less timely—What America Owes to the Sea. It is our obligation to the sea that should stir up our responsibility towards those who go down to the sea in ships. It is what, as a nation, we have gained from the sea and what the sea means to us as a world-power to-day, that should create in every loyal American a practical sympathy with the great work which for over three-fourths of a century the American Seamen's Friend Society has been doing with such signal and manifest blessing.

Look then at one or two items in this obligation of America to the sea. Girdled by the two great oceans of the world on the east and west, and by the Gulf on the south, with a total coastline of over twenty-one thousand miles, the wealth and growth of this republic will depend even more in the future than in the past on her prowess on the sea. She must inevitably become a maritime power, and as the Great Lakes find outlets to the sea, her commerce on the ocean will become colossal. The American navy and the American merchant marine, when it comes to its own, will be two commanding influences in the development of the world. To forget, therefore, or ignore our obligation to and our dependence upon the sea, alike for protection and expansion, would be foolish and unworthy.

Think, for instance, in the first place how much we owe to the atmospheric influences of the ocean for our physical health. The vast ocean spaces are the cleansing places of the world's health. The stormy tempests are the besoms of cleansing, scattering in their fury the miasma of stagnant airs. Although the old fiction of the influence of the Gulf Stream on climate is a thing of the past, yet meteorology, that science which is just passing out of its infancy, is teaching us how profoundly, not only the health but the very life of the world is dependent on what are known as the great cyclonic and anti-cyclonic movements of the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans. Take, for instance, the mysterious south-west monsoons of India, whose failure means famine and death to the teeming millions, and whose advent brings hope and plenty, and what are these monsoon winds but the anti-cyclone of the Indian Ocean which sweeping up from the equator, diffuses itself over the parched plains of India in life-giving moisture right up to the very ramparts of the Himalayas. A sermon—nay a volume—might be written on the wonderful provision of God in these atmospheric currents on the ocean by which the changing seasons, the differing temperature, the varied climate, and the whole health and life of the world are profoundly influenced. In the words of our text, truly "His way is in the sea, and His path in the great waters."

But once more, our obligation to the sea has a more intimate aspect even than that. No student of history can be ignorant of the place and influence which the ocean has exerted in the development of American ideals. It was because of the "inviolate sea" that swept between them and old-world despotisms that the Pilgrims and Dutch and early settlers coming to these shores were enabled to establish

themselves in faith and prayer, secure from the encroaching hands of bigotry and superstition. Three hundred years ago, these three thousand miles of ocean, which seem so little to-day to the leviathans of commerce, meant everything in the Divine Providence in protecting the growth of civil and religious liberty. Just as the sea in its remorseless power was the instrument which God used to destroy the Spanish armada in its attempt to fasten on England the chains of superstition, so for three hundred years these waters that break upon our shores have been the protecting hands which have sheltered the ideals of American life.

Nor can we forget how in the struggle of independence it was the prowess of the American navy upon the sea that made possible her victories on land. From that hour, on December 22, 1775, when Esek Hopkins went out in the first American fleet, carrying the flag of the young republic, consisting of eight wooden vessels, mounting in all one hundred and fourteen guns, till this moment, the achievements of the American navy, represented by men of untarnished honor and unswerving courage, have been a thrilling and inspiring record. In no superficial sense the sea has played its part in American history. Its influence in the early days as a means of separation, and to-day as a means of communication between this land and other lands, has been supreme. The ocean has been, in truth, an instrument of Providence in the growth of American ideals, so that we can once more echo the words of the Psalmist, "Thy way is in the sea, and Thy path in the great waters."

But again, on another occasion than this, much might be said on our obligation to the sea as a commercial factor in American expansion. I do not dwell upon that feature now, excepting only to remind you that commerce on the sea becomes an invaluable adjunct to the spread of Christianity. The mighty liners, which almost every day go from New York harbor laden with American manufacture, are an impressive proof of how the ocean to-day is scattering the influences of American enterprise and industry into every market of the world. And where commerce goes, Christianity is bound to follow. So that the commercial value of the sea becomes also a religious influence, enabling the Christian missionary to place the Bible side by side with the flag.

But I must hasten to point out a more personal aspect of our obligation to the sea. After all, rich as the opportunities are which

the mighty sweep of ocean presents, we cannot forget that it is the men who toil on the sea and who bring to us its argosies of hope to whom our deepest gratitude should be expressed. Marvellous indeed are the records of courage, of devotion, of self sacrifice, and faithfulness to death which the long history of the sea unfolds. Poet and painter, preacher and historian have found their most moving themes in the stirring deeds of bravery upon the sea. Poor, indeed, would our literature be were it robbed of the deathless memory of those who have vindicated the honor of their flag, defended the independence of their country, saved lives at the peril and loss of their own, and have made the achievements of man upon the ocean a worthy parallel to his noblest deeds on land. All honor to the heroes of the sea, the pioneers of discovery, the champions of freedom, the defenders of the weak, the faithful unto death, who sleep beneath the everlasting waves, and over whose graves the beat of the ocean chants its unceasing requiem.

Too often indeed in our travels abroad, in the comfort and luxury of the modern ocean liner, we forget what we owe to these toilers on the deep. We pray readily enough at the outset of our voyage that we may be brought in safety to our desired haven; not often do we remember to record our gratitude in some tangible form when the voyage is over to those whose faithfulness upon the sea has helped to answer our prayers.

So this morning we assemble here in this house of God to record our practical interest in an organization which for over seventy-five years, in a devoted but altogether unobtrusive way, has sought to realize something of that obligation which Christian America feels toward her seamen. The American Seamen's Friend Society is represented in thirty-four foreign and domestic seaports. In these different ports it gives substantial aid to chaplains, missionaries and Bible-readers who visit the different ships in harbor, conduct religious services and generally provide for the material as well as the spiritual needs of the seamen. In these ports, Bethels or seamen's chapels exist, where the sailor may find at least some of the comforts of home and feel around him the influences of Christian friendship. A more blessed, patriotic as well as Christian, work I cannot imagine. While I absolutely dissent from the conventional idea current in most pulpit utterances on the subject that the great majority of sailors are a drunken, dissolute, easily tempted class of men, on a par with the Bowery tough—that view I thoroughly deny—nevertheless the forces

of temptation which the seaman has to meet in the seaport are simply terrific. Moreover these temptations are aggravated a hundred-fold by the lack of that loving, hospitable home-life which a Christian institution properly equipped could provide in every large seaport in the world.

Before this congregation I need not speak of the magnificent work which is being done in this respect on behalf of the American navy. We who have welcomed to the hospitality of this church on several occasions the tars and marines from the Brooklyn Navy Yard, as well as those of us who have been privileged to visit the superbly equipped building which Christian patriotism has erected there for the men of our navy, need not be reminded of the results, far beyond the highest expectation, which that institution has already achieved. But why should our generosity stop at the navy? Has the sailor of our merchant marine no claims upon us? It is a fact, I believe, that there is not a decent Sailor's Home in New York City to-day. Surely the time has come when, with generous hands, the Christian people of this city will rally to the aid of the American Seamen's Friend Society, and make it possible for that organization to do a hundred-fold more than it does in rendering the sailor's life on shore more free from moral peril than his life at sea is free from physical peril. America owes much to the sea; she owes more to her seamen. The hour has come for her to begin to liquidate that obligation in generous help to this Society in whose interests we meet to-day, remembering above all else our obligation to Him "whose way is in the sea, and whose path is on the great waters."

American Seamen's Friend Society.

76 WALL STREET, NEW YORK.

HOW TO HELP THE SEAMEN.

By Prayer.
By Legacies.
By Donations.
By Church Collections.
By Annual Subscriptions.
By Annual Membership, $5.
By Life Membership, $30.
By Life Directorship, $100.
Send a Loan Library (43 volumes) to Sea, $20.

Subscribe for SAILORS' MAGAZINE with LIFE BOAT (children's paper) $1.25 annually.

W. HALL ROPES, Treasurer.

Checks made payable to AMERICAN SEAMEN'S FRIEND SOCIETY.

SUNDAY PRAYER FOR SEAMEN.

On Sunday morning special prayer is made for sailors all over the world on land and sea. Pray that Christian sailors may witness a good confession and be saved from the temptations of the land. That shipowners may seek the Glory of God. That captains and officers may rule with wisdom. The wisdom of love and the love of wisdom be given to those who labor in their behalf.

Ask your clergyman to pray each Sunday for seamen.

"For those in peril on the sea,"

"That do business on great waters."